

# "YOUR REQUESTS"

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An Address given by

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5 DN Broadcast

## "YOUR REQUESTS"

Constantly today, requests are being made. President Nixon recently requested that approval be given by the Congress for the development of anti-ballistic missiles. Students are requesting a greater say in the running of our universities. Employees are requesting higher wages. Teachers are requesting better facilities. The entertainment world is requesting a review of censorship. Many people in our community are requesting our State Parliament not to liberalize the existing laws against abortion. During this Mental Health Week, understanding from the community is being requested for those who are mentally ill.

The Church is being requested today to take a good look at its structures and the presentation of its message, to see how they may be adapted to modern society and its needs.

Many in these days, as always, have their religious requests because they realise that without God life is empty. They are conscious that something real is missing.

Recorded in the New Testament are several occasions when a variety of people with widely different attitudes came to Jesus with their personal requests. Because human nature is basically the same today as it was then, our requests may be similar to theirs, and the answers which Jesus gave relevant to our needs now.

But the answers to your requests for spiritual reality will never be heard unless you are tuned in to God. Some of the most popular programmes on radio are the request programmes. You request a favourite recording, but you will never hear it unless you are tuned in at the right time. If you miss out the fault is not with the radio station, but with you. You have requests to bring before God - then tune in to Him now and listen for the answer.

1. Some came to Jesus with the request "GIVE US A SIGN." "What sign can you give us to see?" they said (John 6:30, N.E.B.) Many people are like that today. "Seeing is believing," they say, and irrationally add, "I won't believe anything I can't see." I don't know what such people expect to see. Do they want to see Jesus Christ in human flesh? If they did they would not believe

that it was Christ. Very few did when He walked the streets of ancient Jerusalem. Do they want to see a vision in the sky? If they did they would give it some other explanation. Do they want to see a miracle? If they did they would say that it was some magical trick.

Seeing is not believing, but believing is seeing. You can not see love, but surely you believe it exists.

The reply of Jesus to His enquirers who had already witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, was "You have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and him who comes to Me I will not cast out." That was Christ's answer to those who wanted to see a sign.

2. Some came to Jesus with the request "SHEW US THE WAY". The words of Thomas as recorded in John 14:5: "Lord, how can we know the way?" Jesus had just been speaking about the way to heaven and the fact that He would prepare a place for those who trust Him. There are many today who want to know the way to heaven, although they are reluctant to admit it.

Some try to win merit with God as do-gooders. Question them about their prospect of heaven and they will reply, "I hope I have been good enough." Others try by religious observances. To suggest to them that these observances in themselves are not the way, brings the reply, "Surely you don't mean to say that more is required than going to church all your life?"

One of the many sermons published by our Trinity Publishing Society is entitled, "Are you Afraid of Death?" Some have complained that it is most awkward to give a sermon with a title like that to anyone, simply because people do not like to admit they are afraid of death, or else they have been lulled into a sense of false security.

When Thomas asked, "How can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

3. Some came with the request "SATISFY OUR DESIRES". The Samaritan woman at the well was such a person. She said to Jesus,

"How can you give me living water?" (John 4:11) There was deep longing in the heart of this lonely woman for satisfaction. She was so empty, even though she had filled her life with unrestrained desires and undisciplined living. But she still remained unsatisfied and thirsty for peace.

There is a strange South American plant which, when it finds a moist place, sends down its roots, becomes green for a little while, until the place becomes dry, and then draws itself out and rolls itself up, and is blown along by the wind until it comes to another moist place. There it repeats the process. On and on the plant goes, stopping wherever it finds a little water until the spot is dry; then in the end, after all its wandering, it is nothing but a bundle of dry roots and leaves. It is the same with those who drink only of this world's springs. They drink and thirst again, and go on from spring to spring, blown by the winds of passion and desire, and at last their souls are nothing but bundles of unsatisfied appetites and burning thirsts.

But Jesus said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water I shall give him shall never thirst again."

Is there an emptiness in your life? Does your happiness depend on "where you are, what you have, whom you know"? Jesus said, "The water I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Are you saying with the woman, "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not."?

4. Some came with the request "GRANT OUR AMBITIONS". The disciples of Jesus came to Him with a question: "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (Matt. 18:1).

These disciples must have had a fair amount of ability. They were privileged to be in the company of Jesus. Some of them were men of the world who knew what it was to get on. I do not think they would have been caught up in a rat race like that of the 20th century, but they still would have had desires for position, privilege and popularity, just like men of the world have today. These were the go-ahead types who wanted to make the most of the person of influence whom they knew. They realised that it is not what you know but whom you know, so these big men came to Jesus with a big question: "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" But

Jesus did just the opposite of what they were thinking. He took a little child and put him in the centre of them all, and answered, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

They needed to be brought from pride to humility  
 from self-sufficiency to dependence  
 from arrogance to submission  
 from fancied greatness to real helplessness  
 from the greatest to the least  
 They needed to be converted  
 from self to God.

What a transformation takes place when a person comes to Christ like a little child, in total dependence and simple trust. A wonderful change occurs.

During the 1966 evangelistic crusade in London, some of the Billy Graham team preached in Hyde Park. One young man in the crowd called out to Dr. Akbar Haqq, "If God is so wonderful, I wish He could change my landlady." "Bring her to Earl's Court", he replied. "Both of you come, and see what happens!"

The ambitious businessman, the tough landlady, the cheeky young fellow - all may be converted when they become as little children to the Kingdom of Heaven.

5. Some came with the request "REWARD MY ENDEAVOURS." That is how a certain rich young ruler came to Jesus. His question was quite simple: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus quickly came to the point: "Keep the commandments." The young man said, "Which commandments?" Jesus said, "Those which show how to love your neighbour." The man said, "I've done the right thing by other people all my life. I haven't murdered anybody. I haven't stolen anything. I haven't done anything wrong sexually. I haven't told lies about people. I've always looked after my parents." Then Jesus said, "Sell everything you have, and give away your money, and follow Me." But, of course, he was not really prepared to do the right thing by his neighbour when it meant that kind of sacrifice. Nor was he prepared to obey the voice of God which was coming to him then. The one thing required

of him was obedience, but he was not prepared to give it.

Reported in the "Sunday Mail" today was the obedience of a 24-year-old country schoolteacher, who this week gave all he had to the Blanket Fund - a cheque for \$989.30. When interviewed, he said, "It concerns my beliefs. I believe in a personal God. I want to spend my life for others, and that involves giving. I waited a while before I posted it, but when I finally dropped it in the letter box I felt free."

What a contrast to the rich young ruler. He was so rich in worldly possessions and yet so poor in spiritual insight; so good in his relationship to others, but so bad in his relationship to God; so wise in bringing his request to Jesus, but so foolish in not trusting His word; so easy for him to inherit eternal life, but so hard for him to accept it; so he went away sorrowful.

6. He was similar to those who came to Jesus with the request "ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS."

There were three groups. The Herodians were a party that favoured the dynasty of Herod and stood for the Roman connection. They cared little or nothing for religion, but they came with a religious question. They introduced their question with hypocritical flattery: "We know that you are true, and you teach the way of God in truth; neither do you care for any man; tell us what do you think. Is it right to give tribute to Caesar or not?" If Jesus answered "yes" He could have been accused of disloyalty to the Jews. If He answered "no" He would be denouncing the Romans. Christ replied, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's."

The second group were the Sadducees who did not believe in the general resurrection or life after death. They came to Jesus with a marriage problem concerning husbands and wives after death. Jesus could see they were not really interested in the answer to the question, so again He asserted from the Scriptures that God is the God of the living, not the dead.

The third group were the Pharisees who were concerned with the letter of the law, and a scribe as their spokesman tried to catch Him out with a question: "Master, which is the great commandment in

the law?" to which Jesus replied, "The first of all is 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind and strength' and the second: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'." Then Jesus said to him, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." Like the rich young ruler he was so near, and yet so far away.

The Herodeans, the Sadducees and the Pharisees asked their questions not to come to a knowledge of the truth, but to avoid the truth, and many who ask questions today do so that they may continue in their doubting and never come to a decision. Are your questions genuine concerning the existence of God, or the Persons of the Trinity, or the different denominations, or the problem of pain, or the truth of the Bible, or the salvation of the heathen? Do you desire to receive an answer or is your questioning a convenient device to avoid commitment to Christ? - so near and yet so far away.

A young person once came to D. L. Moody and said, "If you can give me a satisfactory answer to all my questions I'll come to Christ." The evangelist answered, "You come to Christ first, and then your questions will be answered."

To come to Christ means to believe in Him, which is more than believing about Him. You may believe about the late John Kennedy. He was born into the world, lived a good life, did heroic deeds, gave inspiring addresses; he had friends and enemies, and died a tragic death. People today read books and articles written about him. But Jesus Christ was more than a good man who met an undeserved death, about whom we might read in the Bible accounts of His life. He was the Son of God who came with the express purpose of dying upon the Cross to take away our sins, as the only remedy for our sins, and to rise again from the dead, victorious over the grave, and alive for ever more. He has experienced this life, suffered our temptations, and conquered our enemies. That is why we may come to Him now to answer our genuine questions; in fact, the Living Christ is the answer.

7. That is why we may come to Him now, with the request "DO THE IMPOSSIBLE!"

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus privately at night, and intrigued by what Jesus said, asked "How

is it possible for a man to be born when he is old? (John 3:4) Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus replied, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, 'you must be born again'."

What does it mean to be born again? It means that the Holy Spirit has given you new life. Just as surely as you have been born physically, so because of your faith in Christ as Saviour, you are born spiritually.

I remember a person who came to see me about a deep problem. He talked for a long time. The next day he phoned me and said, "God has come into my life. It's just like being born all over again. The impossible has happened."

The impossible could happen to you right now. "Let your requests be made known unto God." Perhaps your request has been "Give me a sign". That sign has been given once and for all on the Cross of Calvary where Jesus died for the ungodly. Has your request been "Show me the way"? Jesus Christ has opened the way into eternal life. Has your request been "Satisfy my desires"? Christ is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Is your request "Grant my ambitions"? Increasingly it will become, "Not I, but Christ". Is your request "Reward my endeavours"? - they will have their fulfilment in the joy of serving your Lord day by day in every thought, word and deed. Your request "Answer my questions" will not be necessary, because you will know by personal experience that Christ has done the impossible - you have been born again, you have peace of forgiveness, the assurance of salvation and the certainty of eternal life.

"Let your requests be made known unto God."

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